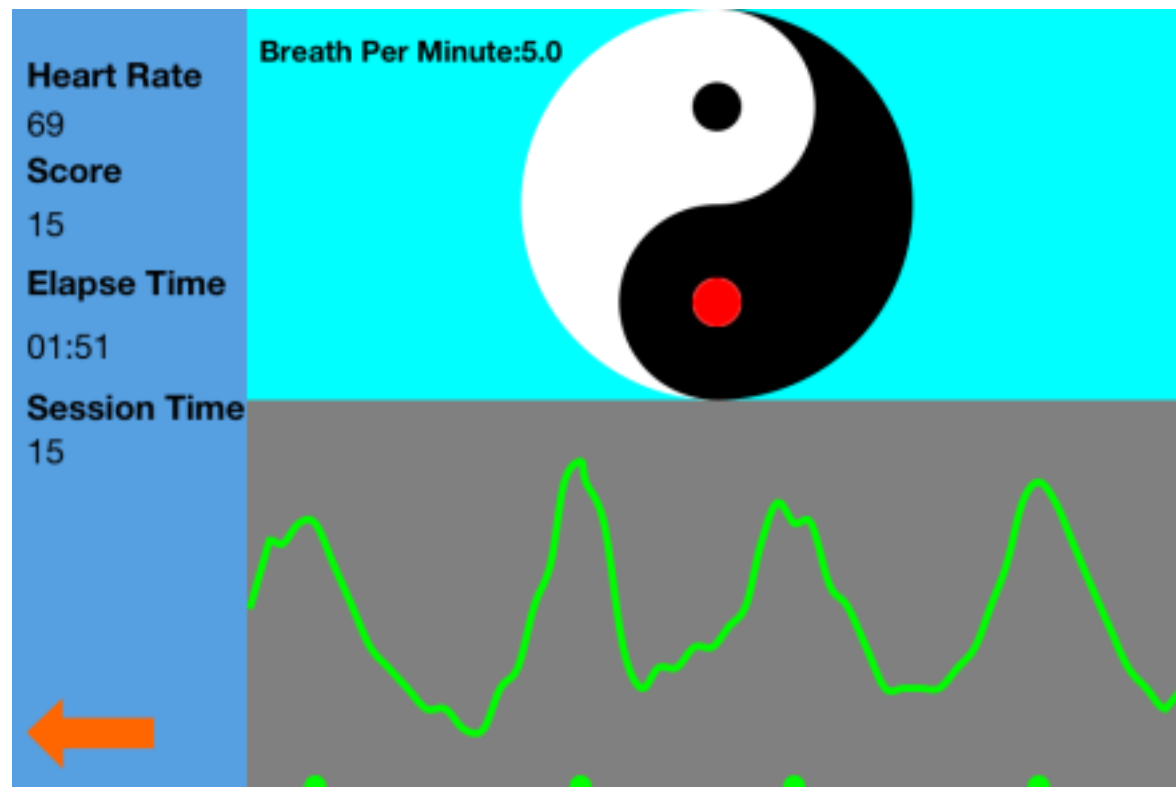


Using your smart phone for stress release

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Screen of StressReleaser

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I recently discovered an app called [StressReleaser](#) available on iPhone and Android phones to be extremely helpful in relieving stress.

After downloading the app and reading through the information page, I went through a quick and simple training that determined my desired breathing cycle (inhale & exhale per minute), I tested it out for five minutes. Instantly, my entire body became pleasantly warm on a frigid day and I felt tranquil.

StressReleaser is a [biofeedback meditation](#) application that helps guide users through a breathing session with a biofeedback point system. Unlike other expensive biofeedback devices, there is no hardware needed. StressReleaser is designed intelligently utilizing a smart phone's built-in camera and flashlight to take a user's pulses during a breathing session. Users put one finger (any finger) to cover the camera and flashlight completely. On the phone screen, users see a blue dot moving up and down in the upper right panel, which signals users when to breath in and out. The speed of the moving dot is based on user's own breathing cycle setting. In the bottom right panel, users see their real-time Respiratory Sinus Arrhythmia (RSA) wave. Users can adjust breathing pace to be steadier by looking

at the moving dot and/or RSA wave. Experienced practitioners can close their eyes during a session. A soothing tone can guide them through the inhaling and exhaling process and ensure they breathe consistently.

Stress is a body's mechanism of reacting to a challenge by activating the [sympathetic nervous system](#), which results in the [fight-or-flight response](#). However, chronic stress has been identified as a culprit for many physical and mental diseases and acute stress can cause sudden death.

Stress Management is essential for better health and disease prevention. Relaxation Response, developed by Dr. [Herbert Benson](#), a Harvard physician, and Miriam Z. Klipper in 1975, is still considered one of the most important methods to relieve stress. Slow breathing combined with being mindful can trigger a relaxation response. StressReleaser facilitates practitioners in reaching a relaxation stage. This app has functionality for users to manage their relaxation response by providing a scoring system and records of their breathing sessions. A practitioner gets two points if a breathing cycle is even-paced, one point if the breathing is not very smooth, and no point if the RSA line is really jagged or the breathing time is too short. StressReleaser recommends two 15-minute sessions a day with 200 points as the goal. With practice, users can improve their scores and breathing technique.

Coherence (TM) is a new science of breathing that is based on the understanding of autonomic nervous system balance and its relationship to subtle heart rate and breathing rhythms. Coherent Breathing is a breathing method that claims to facilitate circulation and autonomic nervous system balance. It involves breathing at the rate of 5 breaths per minute with equal inhalation and exhalation. StressReleaser provides the Coherent rate for each of the breathing session.

StressReleaser advises people using a stomach-breathing method by expanding stomach while breathing in and contracting stomach while breathing out. I tested out with other breathing methods and got the same results. [Tai Chi](#) and [Qigong](#) practitioners can incorporate this app while doing Wuji standing or meditation. You can also breathe following a small heavenly circle (Micro Cosmic Orbit) or a grand heavenly circle (Macro Cosmic Orbit). You certainly can lie down while doing a breathing session.

I have since used it on a daily basis. It calms me down quickly and rejuvenates me during a hectic workday. To avoid interruption, I set my phone on the “do not disturb” mode when meditate so all calls go into voice message recording.

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